

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3953

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 17765

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: SECURITY TREATY AND OPPOSITION PARTY COOPERATION

SUMMARY. DURING PAST FEW DAYS BOTH JSP AND JCP HAVE SUGGESTED NEW FLEXIBILITY ON SEUCIRTY TREATY ISSUE, APPARENTLY IN EFFORT TO PERSUADE VOTERS MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION PARTY COOPERATION COULD BECOME A REALITY. OBSTACLES TO SUCH COOPERATION REMAIN FORMIDABLE AND, WHILE IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER POLICY FLEXIBILITY WILL SURVIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WE BELIEVE IT SIGNIFICANT THAT FLEXIBILITY WAS SHOWN AT ALL. END SUMMARY.

1. JAPANESE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS INVARIABLY PRESENT OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS WITH A DILEMMA. THEY MUST, ON ONE HAND, SUGGEST STRONG POSSIBILITY OF OPPOSITION PARTY COOPERATION AS ALTERNATIVE TO LDP WHILE, ON OTHER, OPPOSITION PARTY CANDIDATES COMPETE BITTERLY WITH ONE ANOTHER IN NATION'S MULTI-SEAT CONSTITUENCIES. THIS YEAR, WITH PROSPECT OF FURTHER REDUCED LDP MAJORITY, CONFIDENTIAL

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INCENTIVES FOR REAL COOPERATION APPEAR GREATER, IF OLD DIVISIONS

CAN BE OVERCOME. MOREOVER, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW PUBLIC WOULD SUPPORT COOPERATION BASED ON COMPROMISE NEAR CENTER OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

2. ONE OF KEY ISSUES WHICH SEPARATE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAS BEEN ATTITUDE TOWARD US-JAPAN MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY. BOTH JSP AND JCP HAVE LONG ADVOCATED IMMEDIATE ABROGATION. BUT IN RECENT DAYS, JSP CHAIRMAN NARITA HAS TWICE INDICATED ABROGATION OF MST "THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS" -- AND BY IMPLICATION, OVER TIME -- WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO PARTY. MORE SURPRISINGLY, JCP CHAIRMAN MIYAMOTO DECEMBER 1 INDICATED JCP WILLINGNESS TO SHELVE SECURITY TREATY ISSUE IN INTEREST OF FORMING "BETTER GOVERNMENT." BOTH NARITA AND MIYAMOTO INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT NEITHER PARTY WAS GIVING UP ITS FUNDAMENTAL SECURITY TREATY POSITION. CLEARLY BOTH NARITA AND MIYAMOTO HAD ELECTION ADVANTAGE IN MIND AND WHETHER APPARENT FLEXIBILITY WILL SURVIVE AFTER ELECTION REMAINS TO BE SEEN. NONETHELESS, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT, IN PRESENT CONTEXT OF DECLINING LDP FORTUNES AND APPARENT VOTER PREFERENCE FOR MORE MODERATE POLITICAL PARTIES, BOTH MEN FELT COMPELLED TO INDICATE NEW FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH JAPAN'S PRINCIPAL ALLY. WHILE JCP MAY REVERT TO CUSTOMARY HOSTILITY TO US AFTER ELECTION, JSP FLEXIBILITY MAY LAST LONGER: JSP STAFFER TOLD EMBOFF DECEMBER 2 THAT JSP CHAIRMAN INTENDS TO LEAD DELEGATION TO US IN 1977 (SEE SEPTEL).

3. THIS GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS ALSO SEEN RENewed DISCUSSION OF SEVERAL -- OFTEN CONTRADICTORY -- PARTY COALITION SCHEMES. JSP CHAIRMAN NARITA LED OFF NOVEMBER 17 WITH PROPOSAL THAT COALITION BE FORMED OF ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES PLUS YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC) AND PORTION OF LDP. IDEA WAS IMMEDIATELY REJECTED BY LDP PRESIDENT (AND PRIMIN) MIKI, DSP AND NLC. CGP, HOWEVER, INDICATED CONDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED JCP, WHOSE PARTICIPATION JSP SEC GEN HAD EARLIER DESCRIBED AS ESSENTIAL, WAS EXCLUDED. CGP WENT FURTHER TO HING AT POSSIBLE SUPPORT OF NARITA CANDIDACY FOR PRIMIN IN POST-ELECTION DIET BALLOTING. (OTHER PARTIES, INCLUDING NLC, HOWEVER, SHOW NO SIGN OF DEPARTING FROM NORMAL CUSTOM OF VOTING FOR THEIR PARLIAMENTARY LEADER.) JCP HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY FAVORABLE TO NARITA PROPOSAL, INDICATING ON DECEMBER 1 THAT PARTY COULD SUPPORT "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT" OF ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES, INCLUDING NLC, BUT WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT DROP ITS ALL-OPPOSITION- PARTY "UNITED FRONT" IDEA.

4. MAIN OBSTACLE TO LONGER TERM COOPERATION, LET ALONE COALITION, AMONG OPPOSITION PARTIES REMAINS THEIR VARIED AND CONTRADICTORY STANCES TOWARD JCP. NLC, DSP, AND CGP ARE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO COOPERATION WITH JCP, WHILE TO PRESERVE ITS OWN INTERNAL UNITY, JSP MUST INSIST THAT JCP BE INCLUDED IN ANY COOPERATION SCHEME.

5. AS IN PAST, OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE ALSO AGREED TO SUPPORT JOINT CANDIDATES IN A FEW DISTRICTS WHERE IT SEEMED MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS. CGP AND DSP HAVE AGREED TO FIELD JOINT CANDIDATES IN FOUR OR FIVE DISTRICTS AND SOME TRANSFERS OF VOTES APPEAR TO BE TAKING PLACE. IN A NEW DEPARTURE, CGP AND JSP HAVE ALSO INITIALED POLICY AGREEMENT AND AGREED TO SUPPORT JOINT CANDIDATES IN THREE OR FOUR DISTRICTS, BUT ARRANGEMENT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE WORKING WELL. REASON FOR DIFFICULTIES IN SUCH AGREEMENTS IS OBVIOUS. JAPAN'S MULTI-SEAT CONSTITUENCIES PIT OPPOSITION PARTY CANDIDATES AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, COMPELLING THEM TO STRESS POLICY AND OTHER DIFFERENCES RATHER THAN SIMILARITIES. TENSIONS OF ELECTION ITSELF ALSO INCREASE DIFFICULTY OF CREATING ANY SORT OF COOPERATIVE MOOD, LET ALONE REAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP.

6. UPSHOT OF ALL THIS IS THAT OBSTACLES TO MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION PARTY COOPERATION REMAIN FORMIDABLE. BUT SUBSTANTIAL PRESSURES FOR INCREASED FLEXIBILITY AND COMPROMISE ARE NOW APPARENT. MORE-OVER, EVEN APPEARANCE OF JSP AND JCP FLEXIBILITY ON TREATY ISSUE HAS AT LEAST SHORT-TERM EFFECT OF MOVING FRAMEWORK FOR JAPANESE DEBATE IN DIRECTION FAVORABLE TO SECURITY TREATY CONTINUANCE IN ITS PRESENT FORM AND THAT, OF COURSE, IS ENCOURAGING. SUCH FLEXIBILITY IS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, TO DIMINISH OPPOSITION ZEAL IN HARASSING GOJ ON DETAILS OF SECURITY TREATY ARRANGEMENTS, SUCH AS MIDWAY PASSAGE, BASE POLLUTION, ETC.; AND IT MAY NOT SURVIVE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OF CAMPAIGN ITSELF.

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